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10 September 1966

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE BULLETIN

CONTENTS

25X1

[REDACTED]

2. Thailand: Foreign Minister Thanat pushing for re-evaluation of arrangements governing US military presence. (Page 4)
3. Syria: Political situation remains fragile as rival factions jockey for power. (Page 5)

25X1

4. Notes: [REDACTED] Netherlands-Indonesia;

[REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

Next 4 Page(s) In Document Exempt

Thailand: Foreign Minister Thanat is pushing for a re-evaluation of arrangements governing the US military presence in Thailand.

In a conversation with US Ambassador Martin on 7 September, Thanat stated that the Thai cabinet had authorized him to explore the possibility of negotiating a "satisfactory" agreement covering mutual military obligations. He claimed that he had the impression that the US military was "doing as it pleased" in Thailand, although he admitted that Prime Minister Thanom had told the cabinet that all US military activities had been properly cleared.

Thanat also argued that continuing criticism of Thailand by important segments in the US led him to doubt the commitment of future US administrations to defend Thailand. He has reacted sharply in recent weeks to criticism of Thailand in the US press.

The Foreign Ministry has recently presented the US with two formal notes, one protesting unflattering remarks about the Thai Government that have appeared in American newspapers, and the other denouncing a 1925 US-Thai visa agreement. Thanat told the US ambassador that the latter note meant that Thailand intended to be treated as a "sovereign and independent nation by everyone."

Thanat's current hypersensitivity may result from the lukewarm reaction of Asian nations to his recent Vietnam peace initiative.

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It is not clear how much support Thanat has among the Thai military leaders for his current campaign. Some of them occasionally have expressed similar sentiments, but it is unlikely that they will back a fundamental change in Thailand's military arrangements with the US.

25X1

10 Sep 66

4

25X1

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25X1

10 Sep 66

4

25X1

Syria: The political situation in Damascus remains fragile as rival factions within the Baathist military regime jockey for power.

Yesterday, the regime claimed that it had crushed the second imperialist-backed coup attempt within 48 hours. Major Salim Hatum, the commando leader who triggered the coup of last February which brought the present radical Baathist group to power, is being accused of having led a plot in collaboration with leaders of the ousted moderate faction of the Baath.

Religious rivalries have played a large part in the recent conflicts. Hatum, a member of the minority Druze sect, has reportedly opposed the ascendancy of members of the rival Alawite sect within the military. At the same time, the majority Sunni Muslims within the army resent the present influence of both minority groups.

Hatum's removal might enable leaders of the regime's two major contending factions to reconcile some of their own differences. Continuing tension and the weakness of the regime's support even within the army, however, will encourage further instability. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

10 Sep 66

5

25X1

NOTES

25X1

Netherlands-Indonesia: An agreement settling the Netherlands' claim for its seized property in Indonesia was signed in The Hague on 7 September, after prolonged negotiations during which the Dutch claim was scaled down from over \$1 billion to \$167 million. The Dutch simultaneously declared their willingness to extend further economic aid to Indonesia. The debt problem has long been an irritant between the two countries and its settlement will encourage the Dutch to expand economic and cultural relations. [REDACTED]

25X1

25X1

10 Sep 66

6

25X1

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